

## **How I Turned Failure into Empowerment**

By Minerva Tovar

I married, for the first time, at the age of 39. Let's just say I did not marry well. I made a bad judgment call that landed me in an abusive relationship. This judgment call caused me to lose contact with family and friends. It caused me to lose custody of my son. I lost myself as a person and a woman. I lost my dignity. In essence, I failed myself.

I often found myself on my knees praying for a change to come to the man I had married. I did not want to fail at marriage. If I failed at this, it would be my first failure at life. I felt that I had conquered much and losing at marriage was non-negotiable.

On my 40<sup>th</sup> birthday, I realized the answer to my prayers had been in front of me all along. Not the answer to what I had specifically asked for, but an answer just the same. Failure had already happened. I had failed myself. I had lost who I was to someone who did not appreciate me or himself. In order for me to turn this failure to my advantage and into a lesson learned, I needed to leave the situation.

On July 6, 2002, I left my husband. I ended up in a town where I knew no one. I dialed 411 and explained my situation to the operator. She connected me to a domestic violence shelter. This moment started my journey to empowerment. I empowered myself to take control of my person. I empowered myself to be me.

It has been 14-years since I started the journey to self. In this time, my child was returned to me. I have watched him grow into a fine young man. I adopted another son, who is also a fine young man. I have been happily employed with the same company for 14-years. I have battled breast cancer and survived. I have reinvented myself and have found that resilience is in everyone.

The time has come for me to give back and use my experience to empower others. I have decided to further my education. I have chosen psychology as my major. I

would like to become a clinical therapist. I feel that I have so much to offer and to learn as well. If I can help one silent witness push through to their own empowerment, then I have succeeded.

In the ethnic cultures, we do not talk about our emotional health. We are a proud people and do not want anyone to feel sorry for us. As a Latina, I know this first hand. I would like to help all ethnic communities feel comfortable in their own skin and to deal with their emotional well-being. We do not have to do this alone. I pray that I can make that difference.